

## FROM THE EDITOR

Welcome to this edition of *African Music*. Being loath to repeating what authors are already providing in their abstracts and keywords, it would instead be more appropriate to focus on aspects of a review of the journal, conducted by the Academy of Science of South Africa (ASSAf) in 2018. ASSAf is affiliated with the South African Department of Science and Technology. The full review of *African Music* and other music journals in South Africa is available on the ILAM website. Below I answer to a few of their concerns and I apologise in advance for the bias towards South African institutions. This is where my experience lies and it will be inappropriate to generalise or speak for the rest of the continent, especially the parts I had not yet experienced. It would be great to have the discussion amplified by voices from elsewhere. While the review is supportive of the journal, and recommends ongoing accreditation for authors, it draws attention to specific issues, among which there are:

Review: The geographical representation of the Editorial Board is not diverse enough. However, in attending to this consideration, a broader international involvement and representation from the African continent should be retained:

Editor's response: My experience as an assessor of theses, a reader for submissions to various journals, and lately, as editor of *African Music*, have me realise that the pool of reviewers, editors and African music scholars is rather small. It would seem that most scholars are specialized on the music in a very few locations on the continent, leaving vast parts of it out of view and thus many scholars are reluctant to comment on areas beyond their perceived specialisations. In addition, the ongoing dominance and appeal of western art music at most institutions in South Africa means that the study of African traditional music and its scholarship remain marginal. The number of submissions to the journal equally speaks to a reality where there are not as many scholars of traditional or neo-traditional music on the continent itself, so the question, is, from where else would one recruit reviewers and members of the Board? An answer could be from the very few locations where productive scholars are active albeit overseas so an imbalance of representation is likely to continue into the near future.

Review: The quality of articles published in *African Music* is generally good, although some articles lack critical analysis or reflexive interrogation. A good number of articles are published per annum. However, some authors contribute on a regular basis which leads to a one-sided focus. Also, in terms of contributions it is noted that there could be a better regional balance both from within South Africa itself, as well as throughout the African continent.

And:

Review: The journal seems to appeal more to an older generation of scholars in the discipline. Publication of valuable research by graduate students and younger staff in the discipline should be encouraged, otherwise there could be a gap once the journal no longer publishes the featured senior African music professors, Andrew Tracey and Dave Dargie. The new Editor has been making concerted attempts at soliciting articles from younger scholars and adopting a developmental approach to publishing articles. However, he has faced several challenges in this regard.

Editor's response: As the journal is opening itself up to many kinds of possibilities

it should fall upon all of us to ensure that our postgraduate students are encouraged to write and submit articles based on their research. This is rarely the case in South Africa, where critical studies of African music are marginal and where the emphasis at institutions is on performance rather than the development of an epistemology of African music. Announcements in which calls for papers are made do not seem to attract wide attention. The journal appeals to more experienced scholars who are aware of its existence and value. While attempts are made to recruit as widely as possible it would seem that mostly experienced scholars have the confidence to make submissions. Another issue is the reality of postgraduate education in the Humanities in South Africa, where students generally are not compelled to attend seminars or have coursework. This is in contrast to their peers in other African countries such as Nigeria and Ghana, for instance, where there is a greater sense of a cohort of students who are fully engaged in what might be considered as postgraduate education by way of producing research papers for publication. Across the continent the challenges are diverse, from general apathy among students to a dire lack of resources. This is the world with which an editor of African music studies has to contend.

Review: The journal is perceived to be more conservative than other journals in the field (such as *Ethnomusicology*, or *South African Music Studies* [SAMUS]) both locally and abroad. It seems to focus on giving visibility to musical practices from the African content with a particular emphasis on the past.

Editor's response: The editor shall make a concerted effort at addressing this concern. It should be noted that in the present climate it is very important to develop more knowledge about this vast continent's musical pasts. This is partly due to the erasure of many traditional music practices as a result of colonialism and the influence of Christianity. In other disciplines in the Humanities, such as languages and history, there is a growing interest in our pre-colonial past. While research today may not revive many of these traditions, studying and bringing attention to many of them may provide a glimpse into a pre-colonial imaginary. This observation is made within the context of calls for a decolonial curriculum at South African universities. We have not yet studied the full impact of colonialism on the continent so looking at the past is another way of navigating backward to understand how our musical futures may unfold.

Review: The Editor should consider diversifying the Editorial Board and including young black scholars. The Editorial Board composition should be revised and its terms of office articulated. A dedicated audio-visual reviews editor should be appointed.

Editor's response: The editor will seriously consider this recommendation. The transmission and sharing of skills are a critical part of scholarship and a reviews editor will be appointed in future, and guest editors will be invited.

Review: It is recommended that the journal include more articles that problematise representational issues, the conceptualisation of African music, politics, power and the production of music for the local and global markets. There should be a balance of articles in each issue so that contemporary and traditional practices are featured in one issue.

Editor's response: Given the number and quality of submissions this is a tall order but it might be possible since *African Music* has been asked to publish a selection of the best papers recently delivered at a conference on traditional African music. All going well

this would mean two editions of the journal in both 2020 and 2021 with the content representing a range of issues related to African music.

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Since late 2017, the manual system has been augmented by the addition of the OJS. The reason for maintaining both systems in the interim is to familiarise authors and the Editor with the OJS. As yet there has been no submissions made through the online system and I hope that authors will in future take to this facility especially since we are moving towards an electronic and multi-media environment for the journal.

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In this edition of the journal there is a variety of topics, from a polemical piece on musicology on the continent to numerous excavations of the jazz history of South Africa, to women in the popular music scene in Nigeria, a phenomenal study of the *dinaka* in Limpopo, an attempt at repatriation and revitalization on the Mozambique and north Zimbabwe border, to the *koriana* music of Lesotho. Contributions are by seasoned scholars to new scholars who without mentoring would otherwise not enjoy the possibility of having their work published. I thank deeply all the reviewers and authors who have contributed to the journal in 2018. For many it added to their long lists of duties and I am eternally grateful for your time and valuable commentaries. Please continue to encourage your students and colleagues to submit their articles to *African Music*. In collaboration with reviewers, I am working within the context of “developmental editing” so that even articles that are not deemed immediately suitable may stand a chance in future.

**Lee Watkins**